QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – SOLICITATION 52PAPT201008

A Site Visit, in accordance with Section L.17, was conducted on April 11, 2002. Attendees at the site visit were not permitted to ask questions during the site visit. Four site visit tours were conducted and the following firms were represented:

Aardvark Business Consulting Group
Advanced Automation Technologies, Inc.
Chugach Systems Integration, LLC
Focus AMC
HiTech Services, Inc.
Horizon Consulting
IKON Office Solutions
Integrated Solutions & Services, Inc.
IntelliDyne LLC
NATEK Incorporated
Operations Research Technology, Inc.
Panacea Consulting
PRGI, Inc.
Quasars, Inc.
Solutron, Inc.
STG International, Inc.
Systems Integration, Inc.
Vistronix, Inc.

Q 1: Under Factor A - Program Approach, relating to Section M.5 EVALUATION CRITERIA, please define what you mean by Planned Resources.

A 1: The USPTO will evaluate the offeror's ability to understand the USPTO environment and to supply the appropriate level of resources to perform all aspects of the statement of work.

Q 2: Under the same Factor and Section as Q 1, please provide the Minimum Qualifications required for the System/Technical Administrator for Scanning.

A 2: These are the tasks we expect the System/Technical Administrator for Scanning to handle:

- Monitoring TICRS electronic workflow of batches throughout the day. Includes monitoring and maintaining all unattended and attended processes on InputAccel (IA) workflow.
- Troubleshooting and repairing all batches of scanned files that encounter various problems thoughout the workflow.
- Regularly running Supervisory modules within IA.
- Monitoring and maintaining TICRS imaging network, including servers, clients, scanning peripherals, and printers.
- Performing routine maintenance on hardware/software, e.g., cleaning hardware, running software O/S optimizers, verifying system backups, etc. and documenting same for inspection by the government.
- Assisting operators with hardware/software problems.
- Fixing any hardware and software problems encountered in the entire process.
- Making recommendations to methods of processing batches by operators.
- Making recommendations to PTO staff of hardware/software modifications.
- Working with programmers on IA PFC modifications.

- Testing IA PCFs, upon release from programmers.
- Contacting hardware/software vendors for troubleshooting, (includes Datamax printers)
- Creating various logs, reports, documentation as needed by PTO staff.
- Attending regular PTO TICRS technical review meetings (weekly).
- Keeping a log of unusual problems, activities, etc.
- Notifying the Chief Information Office, Trademark Systems Division (TSD) (Richard Godikeit, POC) of unusual problems and working with TSD to fix/diagnose.
- Ensuring equipment is turned off at COB when required.
- Running IA Delete
- Reworking (fixing applications that are not accessible to Tradeups)
- Help Desk Calls
- Module Problems
- Monitoring Modules
- Maintaining Access Error Log
- Running CrossPRD
- Rescanning rejects of CrossPRD
- Reviewing the Daily Rename/Reject File (sorting log out day-to-day)
- Fixing Errors
- Unlocking Work Stations in scanning
- Ensuring All Capture Modules are Working
- Retrieving case files for scanning
- Making sure the machines work
- Making sure the software works
- Testing new/edited modules
- Working with the printers in scanning

Q 3: Are the tasks in the Cycle Time/Accuracy Volume Workloads Table the critical success factors referred to in paragraph M.5 of the solicitation?

A 3: The table specifies the minimum requirements for success (i.e. compliance with the contract requirements).

Q 4: The Cycle Time/Accuracy Volume Workloads Table is composed of 22 tasks with a minimum accuracy of 100% required for 13 of them, 99% required for 6 of them, and 98% required for 3 of them. This has the practical effect of excluding those tasks with a minimum acceptable accuracy of 100% from the proposed incentive plan (since you cannot exceed 100%). Was this your intent?

A 4: Yes.

Q 5: In paragraph C.3.2.4 on page 10 of 49 under Data Capture of New Applications Information, the solicitation references 2750 newly received TM applications per week. Are all of these paper, and if not, how many are received electronically and how many are paper?

A 5: Yes, the 2,750 a week are all paper applications.

Q 6: What is a "76-series new application" and how does it differ from other applications?

A 6: All paper applications are assigned serial numbers beginning with “76.” Electronic application serial numbers begin with “78.”

Q 7: In paragraph C.4.1 "Training", the solicitation states "Certain support services will require specific tailored training, provided by the government, at the government's expense." This leads to the following questions: a) How long will this training take? b) Will this training be for current personnel or just newly hired personnel? c) If it is training of current personnel on new applications or systems, will the contractor be required to provide additional personnel to fill in for the personnel undergoing training (this is to prevent a backlog and ensure the required accuracy levels are maintained). d) If not, will the contractor be held accountable for any resultant increase in backlog or slip in accuracy?

A 7: a) One and a half to two days for the tagging training; about 2 hours for the proofing training. b) Tradeups Ids will not be assigned until this training is successfully completed, so yes, it will be provided anytime new contractors are hired. However, the government prefers not to run the tagging training for fewer than 3 trainees. Only 6 taggers may be trained at a time. No minimum limit on the number of proofing trainees is set for proofing training. c) See answer above. d) See answer above.

Q 8: Is there a limit to the length of time for the transition plan?

A 8: The current contract expires on September 30th. We anticipate award of the new contract by August 30th with performance expected to start October 1st. The transition plan should take into account these timeframes.

Q 9: During the transition phase, will PTO provide work space for the contractor's transition team?

A 9: There are severe space limitations in the South Tower Building. This will depend heavily on what is proposed and the impact to existing contractor operations.

Q 10: Section C3: a) Is there a current organization/functions chart for the process? b) Is there a floor plan of the departments?

A 10: (a) Yes. A Trademark Organizational Chart is being made available on our procurement website.
(b) The Commissioner's Office, the Law Library and the Office of Trademark Program Control are on the 10th floor of the South Tower Building (STB).
The Trademark Trial and Appeal Board is on the 9th floor of the STB.
Law Offices 108 and 109 are on the 8th floor of the STB.
Law Offices 107 and 110 are on the 7th floor of the STB.
Law Offices 104 and 114 are on the 6th floor of the STB.
Law Offices 102 and 112 are on the 5th floor of the STB.
The Intent-to-Use (ITU), Post Registration Unit (PRU), and Technical Assistance Center (TAC) are on the 4th floor of the STB.
Pre-examination is on the 3rd floor of the STB.
The Public Search Library is on the 2nd floor of the STB.
Law Offices 101 and 111 are on the 10th floor of the North Tower Building (NTB).
Law Office 106 is on the 5th floor of the NTB.
Law Offices 103, 113, and 116 are on the 4th floor of the NTB.
Law Offices 105 and 115 are on the 3rd floor of the NTB.

Q 11: Section C.3.1: a) Are we to be responsible for quality assurance activities on the electronically transmitted forms in the future? b) What are the electronic reporting capabilities of the government systems currently in use?

A 11: (a) The RFP does not include processing electronic forms except for those printed and delivered as part of incoming mail. (b) There is an event log in TRADEUPS that can be used to track files tagged and uploaded. There are no reporting capabilities from TICRS, except the error logs. TRAM reports can be generated, through special request (Engineering Change Requests) through the COTR, for any field, file status or location. However, due to workloads in TSD, ECRs are prioritized and there is no guarantee that the USPTO can provide special reports due to resource allocations of Government personnel in TSD to work on high visibility projects.

Q 12: Section C.3.2: a) Are there Standard Operating Procedures – guidelines on how things get done and are they available? b) Are there System Policy procedures? The do's and don'ts, the rules of the game?

A 12: (a) There are technical manuals for all of the equipment in the two scanning areas on the USPTO Intranet and COTR-provided instructions for all tasks. There are numerous online reference manuals as well. The Trademark Proofreading Instructions and TICRS Manuals are being made available on our procurement website. (b) The Chief Information Office (CIO) has issued any number of system policy procedures.

Q 13: Do you have Service Level Agreements for each of your six areas: (i.e., mailroom, Fees Processing, Data Capture....etc.)?

A 13: No.

Q 14: Section C.3.2.6.1: a) Can we get a copy of the Data Entry Manual and TIPS referenced on page 11 of 49? b) From a functional flow, if we have proofed the information that goes forward, what is the requirement to do so at the back end C.3.2.6.1. Is this because data has been modified?

A 14: (a) These are lengthy documents that are available only online. Both are part of the government-provided training. (b) Files approved for publication must be proofread because data in the files will have changed during examination in the Law Offices, long after having left the contractor at the front end of the process.

Q 15: Section C.4.3 : Do you have Job Descriptions for the two key personnel ?

A 15: See answer to Question # 2 for information on the Systems/Technical Scanning Administrator. There is nothing available in terms of a job description for the Program Manager.

Q 16: Section C.6: With all the reports being required, can we get some/most/all from the systems or are we relegated to manual modalities?

A 16: Most of the information required cannot be generated from systems reports. For example, there is no way to use any data in any of our systems to count mail received daily. TRAM reports can be generated, through special request (Engineering Change Requests) through the COTR, for any field, file status or location. However, due to workloads in TSD, ECRs are prioritized and there is no guarantee that the PTO can provide special reports due to resource allocations of gov't personnel in TSD.

Q 17: Appendix J: How would the failure of GFE be factored into the meeting of QC goals established in appendix J?

A 17: Depending upon the type of failure, this would be handled on a case-by-case basis. For instance, there is a big difference between the effect of the complete failure of PTONet and the failure of a single PC.

Q 18: Reference: C.3.2.4 Page 10, mid page, 3rd bullet "determining and assigning design search codes, mark drawing codes, and other supplemental information as appropriate and key enter this information into the appropriate location(s)": What process is used to assign the design search codes and mark drawing codes?

A 18: There are online Trademark reference manuals and all of these tasks are taught in the day and a half training session. The Design Search Code Manual is available on the PTO website. Also, see A 12.

Q 19: Reference: C.3.2.4 Page 10, mid page, third bullet refers to identification of "other supplemental information as appropriate and key enter this information into the appropriate locations." Define other supplemental information. What are the appropriate locations?

A 19: The appropriate locations are specific fields in the data entry system. The other supplemental information is information needed to populate our file tracking system that is derived from information provided in the application. This is completely explained in our day and a half training session.

Q 20: Reference: C.3.2.4 Page 10, mid page, 4th bullet states "upload tagged and completed files." From where to where?

A 20: From Tradeups (data entry system) to TRAM (file tracking system)

Q 21: Can the procedures for the tagging process be made available? If so, what are they?

A 21: The procedures are provided in detail in our day and a half training session and are available at the desktop.

Q 22: Are there security procedures in place for the mail room? If so, what are they?

A 22: Yes, we lock up all unprocessed mail at the end of the day. We limit access to the mailroom to contractor personnel and the COTR through Kastle Key access.

Q 23: Where is the tagging done?

A 23: Currently this is done in the computer training room on the 5th floor of the North Tower Building.

Q 24: Can you please provide additional detail or estimates on workload volume fluctuations, i.e.:

	Day	Week	Month
Lowest			
Typical			
Highest			

A 24: The USPTO does not have information on daily fluctuations. Weekly fluctuations do occur, particularly with incoming mail (Monday mail is usually higher than the rest of the week) and monthly fluctuations do occur based on examining attorney outputs for proofreading, especially at the end of the rating year. Fluctuations also occur as a result of office efforts to concentrate on certain work for the examining attorneys. For example, when attorneys concentrate on reducing the files on their “amendeds” shelves, a surge in proofreading can occur and it can also result in a surge of incoming mail.

Q 25: The SOW includes resolving customer inquiries about mail received. How are these inquiries received? How many are fielded on a daily or weekly basis?

A 25: Almost all come in by telephone. Some go directly to the COTR or to others in the organization (like to TAC) and are forwarded to the contractor for resolution. The daily and weekly volume of inquiries is unknown.

Q 26: With regard to proofreading, the solicitation states that in the future the contractor may no longer be tasked to correct the database. Is this because the applicant that submitted the original application electronically will make the corrections?

A 26: No, because it is planned for the government to take this over as part of ongoing process improvements in the Law Offices.

Q 27: What specific equipment will the contractor be expected to use to perform the imaging/scanning tasks?

A 27: For new application scanning: four Kodak 3590 C Scanners and PCs, one Fujitsu FI 4750C scanner, three PC stations, three supervisor stations and fifteen servers. For the incoming paper correspondence scanning: five Fujitsu FI 4750C scanners and PCs and five 8100 Laserjet printers.

Q 28: How are electronic applications entered into the Trademark system? Will this process change in FY2003 when 80% of the applications are received electronically?

A 28: Electronic applications are automatically entered into TICRS and TRAM with the applicant’s submission. This will not change as more applications are received electronically.

Q 29: What is a "76-series paper application"?

A 29: See answer to Question #6.

Q 30: The TICS (Trademark Image Capture and Retrieval System) online supervisor module provides an ability to determine whether applications were mis-scanned or mis-assembled. Does PTO require the contractor to use other tools to make these determinations, either contractor-provided or PTO-provided?

A 30: Yes. Final assembly of the paper file wrapper is done after the data is tagged and uploaded to TRAM. At this point, the file jacket labels are run and the contractor makes an inspection of the mark on the label (see instructions for what to do when certain errors appear on the file jacket labels). Additionally, the contractor should make a visual inspection of files scanned and papers assembled in the file wrapper.

Q 31: Will the Government make the Data Entry Manual, TIPS Official Gazette Review Proofreading Instructions, TICS Manual, TRAM Manual, and Trade-Ups Manual available to the contractors developing proposals?

A 31: The Data Entry Manual and Trade-Ups Manual are one in the same and are only available online internally. A TRAM Manual does not exist. See A 12 for the TIPS Official Gazette Review Proofreading Instructions and TICRS Manuals.

Q 32: Does the Government have an estimate of when in FY 2003 mandated electronic filing will go into effect?

A 33: No, that seems to change every few months or so. It had been assumed that by this year 80% of all files would come in electronically, but that is not happening yet.

Q 34: Has the incumbent contractor been able to achieve the minimum required accuracy levels in each task? If not, what is the average accuracy level achieved over the life of the contract, for each task?

A 34: Except for information releasable under the Freedom of Information Act, the USPTO does not comment on the performance record of its contractors.

Q 35: Is there any overtime associated with the current contract, and if so, in what task?

A 35: On the current contract, overtime is authorized on an “as-needed” basis.

Q 36: Do you anticipate the use of overtime under the effort solicited in RFP 52PAPT201008? If so, how do you want it shown in the unit price tables shown in section B of the RFP?

A 36: The unit price tables in Section B should represent all the labor categories and their respective on-site fully-burdened (i.e., inclusive of overhead, G&A, other indirect expenses, if any, and profit) labor rates. Overtime will be handled similarly to Other Direct Costs (see Section B.4) and will be negotiated by task order on an “as-needed” basis.

Q 37: Does the 50 page limitation on Volume I include the table of contents and the required resumes of the Program Manager and System/Technical Administrator for Scanning?

A 37: The 50 page limitation does not include the table of contents or title pages but does include resumes.

Q 38: Does the contractor supply the truck or van needed to make the deliveries?

A 38: The USPTO does not provide a truck or van.

Q 39: Please confirm the size standard.

A 39: The size standard for this acquisition is $21 million, not $23 million as stated in the solicitation. See Amendment for revision.

Q 40: Do the table of contents and resumes count in the page total? Also, do 11x17" (fold out) pages count as 1 or 2 pages?

A 40: See answer to Q 37. Offeror's proposals shall be submitted on 8 ½ x 11" paper using single-spaced print. 11 x 17" (fold out) pages should be used at a minimum and shall count as 2 pages in the total page count.

Q 41: Is MS Word acceptable and is there a font size that is preferred? For graphics and charts can 10 pitch be used? Also, can the proposal be double columned?

A 41: MS Word is acceptable. Proposals, including any graphs and charts, shall be submitted in a font no smaller than 10 pt. Double columned proposals are not acceptable.

Q 42: How does USPTO determine the number of contractor staff needed to perform at whatever the current workload? How often is the head count adjusted based on fluctuating workload? While application volume has been increasing, how would USPTO handle a workload decrease (perhaps from automation) in terms of contractor staffing?

A 42: All work under the resultant contract will be initiated through Task Orders using the procedures of Section G.8, Task Order Implementation. Task Orders will be initiated when the USPTO provides the Contractor estimated volume estimates, and the Contractor is responsible for determining the number of contractor staff needed to perform the estimated volume estimates by submitting a Task Management Plan (TMP). TMPs are then subject to negotiations before the Task Order is executed.

Q 43: As background investigations are to be conducted on each contractor employee before building access passes are issued, will these background checks be completed well ahead of the start date? During the contract period, how long do background checks typically take for new hires before they can be on-site?

A 43: A temporary badge (non-picture) will be issued once the contract is awarded. This badge is good for 21 days to allow the contractor to start work and get their paperwork submitted. Once the investigative paperwork is submitted and processed, the permanent contractor (picture) badge is issued for a 1 year period and is re-issued annually as appropriate.

Q 44: Please clarify whether the entire proposal is limited to 50 pages (excluding Title Page and Table of Contents) or each section is limited to 50 pages.

A 44: See answer to Q 37. The 50 page limit applies to Volume I – Technical Proposal.

Q 45: Section K.4 (a)(2). The RFP states the small business size standard is $23.0 million under NAICS code 514210. However, the SBA lists this size standard at $21.0 million. Please clarify.

A 45: See answer to Q 39.

Q 46: Section L.19 – Volume I Technical Proposal (c)(2). As part of the Technical Proposal, the offeror is requested to provide a Task Management Plan in accordance with G.8, which shall include a price estimate breakdown by labor category. Does the USPTO intend for the offeror to provide cost data in the technical volume? Normally, cost data of any kind is prohibited for inclusion in the Technical Volume and is normally requested to be detailed in the Cost/Price Volume. Please clarify.

A 46: Cost data is permitted in the Technical Proposal's Task Management Plan.

Q 47: Section B.1 – Schedule of Items. The offeror is requested to provide every labor category required to perform the Statement of Work and an associated labor rate. As several positions/employees can be slotted within a single labor category, is the USPTO looking for total FTE's by labor category or just the labor categories that are required to fill all positions?

A 47: For Volume II, Section 2 of the proposal, offerors are required to provide every labor category required to fill all positions and their fully burdened hourly labor rates. FTE's and hourly projections by labor category or by individual (i.e., price estimate breakdown) are required as part of the offeror's Task Management Plan, Volume I, Section 2.